

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed April 13, 2005 has been carefully considered along with the references cited therein. In the subject Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 16, 18-23 and 25 under § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lin (U.S. Patent No. 4,950,958) in view of Bogdan (Canadian Application No. CA 2282819 A1). The Examiner also rejected claim 26 under § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lin and Bogdan as applied to claim 23 above, and further in view of Katogi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,659,622). Applicants acknowledge that claims 2-3, 6, 9-15 and 27-29 are allowed. Claim 24 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant appreciates the indication of allowable subject matter.

Claim 23 has been amended to include the limitation recited in claim 24, which was found to be allowable by the Examiner. Claim 16 has been amended to include a limitation from claim 21.

Claim 21 was rejected as being unpatentable over Lin in view Bogdan. Bogdan fails to disclose "an integral optical element that distributes light emitted by the plurality of light emitting elements along the lighting strip, wherein the tube is formed by an extrusion molding." Bogdan discloses a lens tube 14 (FIGURE 1). The lens tube 14 includes a curved portion 20 that "extends horizontally (H) along the length of lens tube 14." Page 8, lines 14-15. The curved portion 20 includes a plurality of rows of integral ribs 26 that extend horizontally along the entire length of the lens tube. The ribs 26 are made of horizontally extending projections 27 and grooves 29 that serve "to distribute the light generated by LED array 12 laterally along the surface of the running board step 18." Page 8, line 32-page 9, line 1. The horizontal ribs 26 distribute light in a lateral direction and not along the length of the lens tube 14.

Bogdan indicates "that while it would be advantageous to have ribs 26 extending laterally (L) within curved portion 20 of lens tube 14, it is much more economical to utilize horizontally (H) extending ribs 26 which can be formed as part of the extrusion process used to manufacture lens tube 14." To distribute light in the horizontal direction, which would be along the length of the lens 14, Bogdan spaces the LEDs of LED array 12 close together so that their light bands BND intersect and re-enforce one another appropriately." Page 11, lines 20-21. Bogdan teaches spacing the LEDs from the running board step

enough of a distance so that the horizontal "foot print" on the surface of the running board step overlap one another.

Bogdan indicates that were the lens tube 14 is positioned closer to the surface of the running board step 18 the LED array 12 is not sufficient to disperse the light appropriately in the horizontal direction. See page 11, lines 27-31. In such a case, Bogdan teaches positioning the LEDs of the LED array 12 closer together, providing a milky white finish on the lens tube 14, and/or providing ribs that extend in the lateral direction. However, Bogdan admits that these lateral ribs cannot be formed as a part of the extrusion process. Amended claim 16 recites that the tube is formed by an extrusion molding and that the optical element distributes light along the lighting strip. Bogdan expressly teaches away from such a configuration. Accordingly, the two references combined by the Examiner to reject claim 21 do not disclose all of the limitations recited in amended claim 16. Accordingly, amended claim 16 patentably defines over the cited references.

All formal and informal matters having been considered, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. Seeing that this is an After Final Response, Applicant has not raised any new issues that require additional search since Applicant has only amended the independent claims to include limitations that have already been previously presented to the Examiner. Applicant asks that the Examiner allow this application to grant.

Respectfully submitted,

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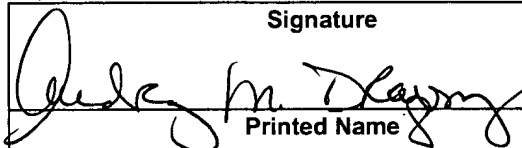
June 13, 2005
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